

Bill is survived by his daughter, Debbie Prentiss; his son-in-law, Paul; grandsons, Jason and Steven Prentiss of Fort Collins; his son, David Maurer of Fort Collins; and his brother, Richard C. Maurer of Manassas, Va.

Bill was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Joyce of 48 years; and his parents, Richard and Lenore Maurer.

INTRODUCTION OF BIA REFORM LEGISLATION

HON. ROB SIMMONS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 2004

Mr. SIMMONS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the entire Connecticut House delegation to introduce legislation to provide uniform criteria for the administrative acknowledgment and recognition of Indian tribes, and for other purposes.

Today's legislation seeks to codify in statute the seven mandatory criteria for the recognition of Indian tribes and to end the "revolving door" exemption that allows former BIA officials to represent and lobby on behalf of groups seeking recognition immediately after they leave the federal government.

The Connecticut congressional delegation recently met with Interior Secretary Gale Norton. At that meeting, I raised the two issues contained in this legislation. With regard to putting the seven criteria in statute, Secretary Norton said that she had no "immediate objection to it." When asked about ending the "revolving door" exemption, she responded even more favorably, saying that since coming to the Interior Department she had been "troubled by it." Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged that we have found common ground with Secretary Norton on these two key issues and I'm hopeful that our delegation can work with her and the BIA to pass this bill.

Tribes need to be granted the federal status they deserve and accorded their sovereign rights, but the determination to acknowledge such tribes cannot and should not be made unless these groups clearly meet all seven of the criteria. To ensure these standards are met, my legislation would codify each of these seven criteria, ensuring that "federal acknowledgement or recognition shall not be granted to an Indian tribe unless the Indian tribe has met all of the criteria listed." This law will provide an equitable process to groups that clearly meet all seven tests, while preventing claims from groups that fall short of one of these standards. No longer will the BIA be able to pick and choose among these criteria to find in favor of a petitioner.

What's more, Mr. Speaker, my legislation would end the so-called "revolving door" exemption that allows former BIA officials to immediately begin representing petitioning groups before their former colleagues and employer. When members of Congress or other members of the executive branch leave government service for the private sector they must refrain from lobbying for one year. It is unfair to have one particular agency exempted from this law. Moreover, it is particularly troublesome that this agency enjoys such an exemption given the significant role that money, gambling, and political influence have come to play in recognition decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support these two much-needed reforms to the BIA to make our Indian recognition process more transparent and more equitable for all parties involved.

HONORING WALLA WALLA COUNTY'S 150TH BIRTHDAY

HON. GEORGE R. NETHERCUTT, JR.

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 2004

Mr. NETHERCUTT. Mr. Speaker, today I come before the House of Representatives to pay tribute to Walla Walla County on its 150th birthday. Nestled in the valley of the Blue Mountains, Walla Walla County anchors the southern end of the 5th Congressional District of Washington State.

During their exploration of the Louisiana Purchase, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark passed through Walla Walla County on the Nez Perce trail on their return trip East. In the 1800s, numerous settlements, forts, and trading posts were established in the region by fur-traders. The Walla Walla Valley was also home to a diverse Native American population including the Walla Walla, Yakama, Nez Perce, Umatilla and Cayuse tribes. In fact, the name Walla Walla is of Indian origin and means "many waters."

The 1st Washington Territorial Legislature created Walla Walla County on April 25, 1854. After the Washington Territory was established in 1853, Walla Walla County was established a year later and stretched from the crest of the Cascades to the crest of the Rockies, an area now represented by 13 congressional districts. Today, Walla Walla County is home to many wonderful towns, including Walla Walla, Waitsburg, Prescott, Burbank, Dixie, Touchet, Lowden, Wallula, and College Place.

Walla Walla is known for its gorgeous scenery, expansive farmlands, miles of beautiful forests, and historic cityscape. Although the area is famous for its sweet onions, Walla Walla farms produce vast amounts of wheat, barley, apples, asparagus, alfalfa, carrots, cherries, corn, garbanzo beans, and green peas. More recently, Walla Walla has become one of the fastest growing wine producing regions in the country.

Walla Walla County is a wonderful place to live. It offers year-round cultural events including theater, musical performances, art displays, and wonderful festivals. The county is also home to three institutions of higher learning: Walla Walla College, Walla Walla Community College, and Whitman College, all of which add greatly to the vitality of the area. The city of Walla Walla is also home to what Sunset magazine named as the "Best Main Street in the West."

If you haven't made vacation plans or visited Walla Walla and its surrounding area before, this is surely the time to come to Washington and join us in celebrating Walla Walla County's 150th birthday. Walla Walla County is one of the most beautiful places in America, and I am proud to say I represent this area and the people who call it home.

THE PRESERVING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE DRUGS ACT

HON. ROBERT MENENDEZ

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 22, 2004

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to be joining Senator CORZINE and my Democratic Colleagues from New Jersey in introducing the Preserving Access to Affordable Drugs Act to preserve the drug benefits that millions of seniors in our country currently enjoy. Unfortunately, the misguided Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003, which was recently signed into law, threatens to reduce or eliminate the prescription drug benefits that millions of seniors across the country already have. Based on these and other detrimental provisions in the new law, which seniors continue to oppose vehemently, we should simply repeal the entire bill outright. But in the meantime, the bill I'm introducing today highlights the most egregious loss of benefits that seniors will suffer under the new law, and provides mechanisms to "hold harmless" those seniors who already have good drug coverage.

The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that as many as 1.7 million retirees could lose their employer-based prescription drug benefits as a result of the new Medicare prescription drug benefit. Also as a result of the new law, hundreds of thousands of seniors currently enrolled in state pharmacy assistance programs (SPAPs) will be forced out of those programs and into a private Medicare drug plan. Approximately 6 million seniors who are dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid will lose access to their Medicaid prescription drug benefits, which is more generous and has greater access to a variety of drugs. And, despite the fact that the new Medicare law has huge gaps in coverage, seniors who choose to enroll in the new drug benefit will be prohibited from purchasing Medigap coverage to pay for prescription drugs not covered by the new Medicare benefit.

In my home state of New Jersey, alone, 94,000 retirees will lose their employer-based prescription drug benefits. More than 150,000 low-income seniors in New Jersey who are dually eligible for, and enrolled in, both Medicare and Medicaid will lose access to the Medicaid drug benefits they currently rely on. And 220,000 New Jersey seniors who are currently enrolled in Pharmaceutical Assistance for the Aged and Disabled (PAAD) and Senior Gold, the state's pharmacy assistance programs for the aged and disabled, will face disruption in coverage and will likely receive less drug coverage than they currently receive.

It is my view—and based on what I have heard in town hall meetings in my district, the view of an overwhelming majority of seniors in this country—that no senior should be made worse off by the new Medicare law.

The legislation I'm introducing today will:

Preserve employer-based retiree prescription drug coverage by allowing employer expenditures on drug costs to count toward the out-of-pocket threshold of \$3,600. By not counting toward the catastrophic cap any costs covered by employer-provided retiree benefits, those employers that maintain their retiree health benefits would see their retirees